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March 5, 2021

The Honorable Gary A. Winfield
The Honorable Steven J. Stafstrom
The Honorable Alex Kasser
The Honorable Matt Blumenthal
The Honorable John A. Kissel
The Honorable Craig C. Fishbein

Joint Committee on Judiciary
Connecticut General Assembly
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairs Winfield and Stafstrom, Vice Chairs Kasser and Blumenthal, Ranking Members Kissel and Fishbein, and Members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing to testify and to express my strong support of **Proposed Bill 6321 An Act Concerning the Adoption and Implementation of the Connecticut Parentage Act.**

I have been a Connecticut licensed attorney for 19 years, and since 2006, I have devoted my practice exclusively to the area of family building through Assisted Reproductive Technology Law. My practice focuses on helping clients create or expand their families through the use of a surrogate. The Connecticut Parentage Act ("CPA") will provide the guidance and regulation, which right now is absent, for the increasing number of people who are using a surrogate to help build their families. I have firsthand knowledge and experience of the improvements that could greatly benefit my clients and the experience they have in creating their families through surrogacy.

I assist my clients with detailed surrogacy agreements in order to start or expand their families. Right now, Connecticut has no laws to regulate these agreements. I handle many cases each year involving Connecticut parents and surrogates, and it is imperative that all parties to these

arrangements have clear guidance and the protections of state law. The CPA will provide the necessary guidance, reassurance, and legal protections that these intended parents and surrogates need and deserve.

It is important to note that the parties to a surrogacy arrangement share the common goal of ensuring that the child's legal parents are clearly and correctly established prior to the birth. The parties all wish for the intended parent(s), and not the surrogate, to be declared the legal parent(s), and for the child's birth certificate to accurately reflect the same. However currently, the only mechanism for an intended parent using a surrogate to establish their parental rights involves filing a traditional lawsuit in the Superior Court. Current practice requires that a State Marshal serve the surrogate with court paperwork and a court Summons as though it were an adversarial dispute. It requires a formal hearing with in-person testimony from all parties, who must take the witness stand and disclose private, detailed and sensitive and confidential medical information during an open court session.

The CPA is important for many reasons, so that all children can have equal access to the security of a legal parent-child relationship. For my clients using a surrogate, it will allow them to waive the service requirement and will remove the need for them to provide intrusive, in-person testimony. This will also allow the parties to save their resources, both time and money, and ensure that their time off work is spent with their families and new child, and not in a court. Finally, the CPA will allow judges the discretion to approve assented to surrogacy arrangements, saving the courts' resources as well.

To summarize, the CPA will ensure that legal parentage for children born through a surrogate in Connecticut is accessible, and that the process is clearly outlined for all parties involved. Currently, Connecticut lacks protections for families formed through surrogacy and assisted reproduction, and I therefore urge you to consider and support Proposed Bill 6321, the Connecticut Parentage Act. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Leslie R. Lightholder

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